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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ATHENS 001455

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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [GR](#) [IR](#) [PHUM](#) [CVIS](#) [KCRM](#) [PREL](#)  
SUBJECT: MFA SEC GEN ON IRAN, VISA WAIVER, GTMO DETAINEE,  
MLAT, GEORGIA ASSISTANCE, MACEDONIA NAME

REF: A. SECSTATE 106853  
[1](#)B. SECSTATE 104974  
[1](#)C. 07 SECSTATE 49938

Classified By: DCM DEBORAH MCCARTHY. REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY: In an October 16 meeting, DCM raised with MFA Secretary General Agathocles a range of topical issues, including: 1) Greece's status in the Visa Waiver process and our intention to move ahead (Agathocles was pleased to hear the news but cautioned that certain legal issues remained to be discussed); 2) our desire that Greece and the other three outstanding EU members ratify immediately the U.S.-EU Extradition and Mutual Legal Assistance Agreements (Agathocles promised to contact the MinJust to urge them along); 3) the proposal that Greece accept for transfer and release a Palestinian Guantanamo detainee (Agathocles would pass on the request but cautioned that the GOG Parliamentary majority was shaky and the leadership might not want to take on a potential hot potato); and 4) our hope that Greece could contribute more to Georgian assistance at the upcoming October 22 Donors' Conference in Brussels (the will was there but the GOG budget was now extremely tight given the current financial crisis). On the Macedonia name issue, Agathocles said Athens sensed a new, more aggressive attitude on Skopje's part and expressed concern that PM Gruevski could "poison the atmosphere," which would have a lasting negative impact on Greek-Macedonian relations.

[1](#)2. (S) SUMMARY CONT. Agathocles also provided a readout of his October 5-9 visit to Iran, noting that it was his first visit there, that he was well received by the Iranian FM and two deputy FMs, and that he pressed the Iranians on nuclear issues. The Iranians wanted good relations with the West, including the U.S., but would not give up their "peaceful" nuclear program in the face of sanctions. The Iranians were "prepared to mend fences" with the West in exchange for regime-security guarantees. END SUMMARY.

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[1](#)3. (S) We requested the meeting with MFA Secretary General Agathocles to get a readout of his recent trip to Iran (see para 9-11 below) but also used the opportunity to discuss with him a wide range of current bilateral issues:

[1](#)4. (C) VISA WAIVER: DCM previewed Friday's White House ceremony and Presidential announcement on the Visa Waiver program, noting that while Greece would not be amongst the initial countries that have met the criteria, we intended to move forward with negotiations on the outstanding documents and expected that Greece would qualify as soon as those documents were completed. She said senior DHS representatives would meet with Greek Ambassador to the U.S. Mallias in Washington to provide U.S. comments on the latest Greek proposals on the VWP MOU and to start discussions on the Agreement on Preventing and Combating Serious Crimes

(PCSC). We also looked forward to receiving Greek comments on our last proposals on the HSPD-6. Agathocles was pleased that we intended to move forward with negotiations, but he cautioned that there were outstanding legal issues, particularly with the HSPD-6. Admitting that he was not familiar with the details, Agathocles said he understood from his people handling the issue (NOTE: Amb Aliferi and her staff in the MFA C4 Directorate. END NOTE) that Greece would be unable to accommodate a confidential addendum to the HSPD-6 ratification legislation, but that they had some ideas how to overcome this problem and would share them with us.

15. (SBU) U.S.-EU EXTRADITION AND MUTUAL LEGAL ASSISTANCE AGREEMENTS: DCM pointed out that the U.S. Senate had finally ratified these agreements, leaving only Greece, Belgium, Ireland, and Italy amongst the EU member-states that had not done so (ref B). Agathocles said such delays were "typical" of the Greek system and promised to contact the Ministry of Justice to urge them to move forward promptly on the legislation.

16. (S) GUANTANAMO DETAINEE: We outlined the U.S. proposal on the transfer and release of the Palestinian detainee from Guantanamo and noted that we could make available additional information on the detainee and our preferences for his transfer and release if Greece needed it (ref A). Agathocles said he would pass the proposal to the GOG leadership but said that he would "be surprised" if they were interested, given the current precarious political situation for the government (which has a razor-thin two-seat Parliamentary majority (152 of 300 seats) and is under heavy pressure due to the Vatopaedion corruption scandal and the world-wide

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financial crisis). He further explained that a Palestinian detainee would be particularly difficult for Greece to accept, even more so than the Chinese Uighur detainees that Greece earlier considered accepting (ref C). Greece wished to avoid trouble with any of the various Palestinian factions and accepting him would undoubtedly displease someone in the Middle East.

17. (SBU) GEORGIA CONFERENCES: DCM said we had not yet received a readout of the October 15 Geneva Georgia conference but our impression from the press reports was that it had not gone well. With regard to the October 22 Georgia Donors' Conference in Brussels, we asked what Greece would pledge. Agathocles replied that Greece might give additional funding but noted that the Greek budget was under much pressure due to the financial crisis. He explained that while the MFA could understand the need to support Georgia -- and that the amount would hardly have an impact on the overall budget -- politicians outside foreign-policy circles were likely to complain about supporting the Georgians when Greeks were entering increasingly difficult economic times.

18. (C) MACEDONIA NAME ISSUE: Agathocles said Athens sensed a change of strategy in Skopje to a more offensive posture, as evidenced by PM Gruevski's statements on the detention in northwestern Greece of Macedonian journalists near Greek military facilities. The Skopjan approach "makes people jumpy," Agathocles said. "If Gruevski poisons public opinion, it will have a lasting impact," will be bad for Gruevski politically, and had the risk of leading to "bloodshed." Gruevski, he argued, was young and did not understand the implications of his statements or actions. DCM reminded Agathocles about her recent visit to Skopje and related how the Macedonians conveyed a determined focus on identity issues. She also noted the common interest of all parties in finding a resolution to the name issue as soon as possible and agreed with Agathocles on the dangers of poisoning the atmosphere.

IRAN

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¶9. (S) On his October 5-9 trip to Iran, Agathocles said it was his first time there, but that he was "well received" and had much publicity in the Iranian press. He met with the Iranian FM for more than hour, as well as had separate meetings with two deputy FMs. Overall, the Iranian "mentality" was very different from the Arab mentality. The city was very clean and the shopkeepers did not use the kind of high-pressure tactics one suffers in a souk. The Iranians believed they belonged to the West and, like the Turks, had the attitude of citizens of a big historical power who believed they deserved to be treated with respect. The Greek Ambassador in Teheran told him there was much discontent amongst the middle class, which was feeling the pinch of sanctions. At the same time, a large percentage of the population was young and pro-Western. He noted anecdotally that many Iranian women quietly rebelled by showing a bit of bangs from their head scarves and wearing large Armani sunglasses.

¶10. (S) At the political level, the Iranians sensed a change in U.S. policy and told Agathocles they were willing to "mend fences" with the West in exchange for regime security guarantees. With regard to sanctions, Agathocles said this issue was largely handled by the Greek Ministry of Finance, but he noted that Greece needed to keep channels open to the Iranians. Greece obtains a significant portion of its oil from Iran and needed energy options, Agathocles argued. But Agathocles said he also pushed the Iranians on the nuclear issue, warning them of both the potential response of the West and the dangers of a Middle East arms race. The Iranians, however, had a very legalistic mindset and insisted that their nuclear program was only for peaceful purposes. Agathocles told them that if that were the case, no one could see it. Dealing with the Russians on enriched uranium did not help the case. The Iranians nevertheless insisted that, whatever the optics, they would not fold under sanctions. They were prepared to talk with Solana but would not halt their nuclear program.

¶11. (S) Finally, the Iranians related to Agathocles their concerns about geo-politics in the region. They had good practical relations with the Russians because both governments worried about the situation in Afghanistan. Indeed, the Iranians were cooperating with the Russians inside Afghanistan (no further details provided). The West, the Iranians argued, "didn't get it" on Afghanistan. The Iranians considered the Pashtun as family -- their languages were very similar. They saw Karzai as very corrupt and they

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feared the influence of the Taliban on the Saudis and others in the Middle East. The Iranians also strangely argued that the British were helping the Taliban. Agathocles said he could not understand what they were getting at, but later decided they had been trying to smear the British because of the latter's involvement in Iraq.  
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